1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

Death and Burial

When a person is dying, all the kin within reach gather round him; otherwise the agony would be much prolonged. Hippolyto's wife fought death for two hours until the arrival of Nino, her husband's paternal uncle, who sent for her husband. Already unconscious, she expired as soon as Hippolyto arrived at her side. Paternal male relatives, primarily brothers and uncles, dig the grave, but other kin also help. They clip the hair, if it has grown excessively during illness, placing the surplus hair next to the body. Nino told me that, on the occasion of his father's death, his mother had the shaman Romão called in, who took down the invisible hammock of the deceased's soul (načii'), rolled it up, and placed it beside the body. At the dead person's side of the house are placed a bit of food and a little drink that he liked when he was alive. All the Tukuna whom I consulted agreed that in ancient times the body was buried, with knees flexed, in an urn; it was decorated with armbands, tooth necklaces, and glass beads. The deceased never had his weapons with him in the grave, lest his načii' use them against living persons. A pot was placed upside down over the mouth of the urn. Thus it was carried to the cemetery (ta'uke) and buried, not very deeply. Over the grave, which was sometimes marked with a stake of muirapiranga wood, the food was placed which previously had been put at the side of the corpse when it was in the house, or a little maize, water, and fire; otherwise, the načii' would come at night and disturb the provisions kept in the house. Highly regarded persons, especially children, were buried inside the house, which was not burned down.

There are no reports of secondary burial. Weeping of relatives for the deceased was, and is, moderate, and there are no attempts at suicide, mutilations, or injuries motivated by mourning. Upon returning from the burial, all bathe, rubbing themselves with calabash tree (*Crescentia cuyete*) leaves to free themselves of the smell of the corpse. The house is swept, but not the path to the cemetery. On that, however, they scatter the leaves of a plant called dçatę, which serve as flails, arraias (lit., rays, skates) for the načii', impeding their return.

On the left bank of the Igarapé da Rita, a little above Hippolyto's place, an ancient cemetery was discovered, containing many burial pots with bones and beads, covered with flat receptacles. Bates also refers to Tukuna urn burial: "The dead bodies of their chiefs are interred, the knees doubled up, in large jars under the floor of their huts." Tessmann describes a form of burial so different that his informant must have referred to funeral customs of some other tribe with which he was acquainted:

> Alle Leute, Häuptlinge, gewöhnliche Leute und Kinder werden gleichartig bestattet und zwar in einem Kanu das mit Holzplatten zugedeckt wird. Dieser Sarg wird nicht in den Häusern begraben sondern ausserhalb, in der Pflanzung.... Bei Zauberern wird die Leiche nicht wieder ausgegraben, wohl aber bei Lichtmenschen. Es geschieht nach etwa vier Monaten. Die Schädel und alle Knochen werden herausgenommen, sauber gereinigt, in Körbe getan und an einer besonderen Stelle, die Tauke genannt wird, von neuem bestattet. Es soll ein kleiner Hügel über dieser Stelle aufgehäuft werden.

Canoe burial was practiced by the Omágua, of whom Heriarte wrote in 1662: "When they die they are buried, taken to the river with great ceremony and with